Hall of Melody

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by

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Dedication

I dedicate the book to my grandfather Hazrat maolana Muhammad Sahreef Vaseer

Preface

Hall of Melody is not merely a literary composition about musical instruments; it is a symbolic and philosophical meditation upon the inner music of existence. Rooted in the rich imaginative traditions of the East, the work transforms ordinary instruments into living presences, granting them voice, temperament, consciousness, and wisdom. In doing so, the author elevates sound into symbolism and melody into metaphysics.

From the earliest civilizations, music has occupied a sacred place in human consciousness. Philosophers regarded it as the harmony of the cosmos, mystics heard within it the echo of eternity, and poets discovered in its cadence the language of the soul. This book belongs to that noble intellectual and spiritual lineage. Its pages do not merely describe instruments; they unveil them as mirrors of human character and stations of spiritual experience.

Within this allegorical “hall,” every instrument speaks with its own identity and disposition. Some are proud and

thunderous, others delicate and contemplative; some embody passion, while others suggest restraint and wisdom. Yet above them all rises the figure of the flute, beloved by the king and honored beyond the rest. The preference carries profound symbolic significance. The flute, hollow within, becomes capable of producing sublime music. Its emptiness is transformed into receptivity, its silence into expression. Thus, what appears outwardly vacant becomes inwardly luminous.

Particularly striking is the philosophical discourse surrounding the six holes of the flute. The ministers, interpreting their hidden meaning, unfold a meditation that transcends music and enters the realm of spiritual philosophy. The six openings become symbols of perception, discipline, consciousness, longing, and the human struggle between earthly attachment and transcendence. In these passages, the reader encounters not only intellectual subtlety but also mystical depth.

The symbolism inevitably recalls the spiritual imagery of the reed-flute in the writings of Jalal al-Din Rumi, where the flute becomes the voice of separation and yearning — the cry of the soul exiled from its eternal source. Yet *Hall of Melody* possesses its own independent artistic identity. Rather than imitating classical mystical literature, it converses with that tradition while shaping a distinct philosophical vision of its own.

One of the remarkable qualities of this work is its layered richness. It may be appreciated simply as an imaginative assembly of speaking instruments, alive with dialogue and symbolic drama. At a deeper level, however, it reveals itself as a contemplative reflection upon ego, harmony, kingship, spiritual refinement, and the search for inner truth. The musical court portrayed in these pages is, in reality, a portrait of humanity itself — diverse voices seeking meaning within the grand orchestra of existence.

In an age filled with noise yet deprived of inward listening, Hall of Melody reminds us that true music is not born merely of sound, but of spiritual resonance. The instruments gathered in this symbolic chamber are not fashioned only of wood, brass, or reed; they are shaped from human emotions, aspirations, vanities, and awakenings.

It is hoped that this English rendering of Hall of Melody will carry its philosophical beauty and mystical cadence to a wider audience, allowing readers across cultures to hear, within its echoes, something of their own inward song.

Muhammad Yousaf Vaseer

The Prelude

This is the tale of a kingdom that was never fixed upon any map of the earth, yet whose pulse could be heard clearly beating against the veils of time. Its borders were not built of brick and stone, but woven from the delicate interplay of melody and silence. In this realm, dawn rose not with light, but with the soft rāg of the wind, and dusk descended wrapped in a shawl of golden stillness. It was a strange, yet profoundly prosperous, dominion.

The cities of this land were strung together like a necklace of pearls. Its streets shifted colour like a rainbow, and in its bazaars, breaths were bought and sold. When its artisans touched iron, it softened like clay; when they spoke to wood, it bent and revealed its veins; and when metals melted, they did not shriek but whispered their histories in soft, smouldering sighs. The people here knew that every substance possesses a temperament, and every temperament has its own rhythm.

A wondrous balance governed the lives of the subjects. When the peasant drove his plough, a melody rose from the earth;

when women spun their wheels, the very thread quivered with a silent prayer; and when children played, they did not shout with laughter but hummed in harmony. None were hungry, yet none were overly sated — as if contentment itself was the national fare. Here, wealth existed without ostentation, knowledge without arrogance, and worship without hypocrisy.

The sovereign of this empire — whom the people called only the Great Instrument-Maker — was not tall of stature, yet his silence carried immense weight. In his eyes, time seemed to stand still, and on his forehead, questions had etched their furrows. When he issued a command, it bore not the harshness of force but the clarity of order; when he smiled, the expression revealed not victory but understanding. In his court, there were no swords, only scales — scales to measure the heft of words and the sincerity of intentions.

It was said that in his youth, the Great Instrument-Maker had chosen a long silence. That silence gifted him the ability to hear what ordinary ears cannot: the hidden instruments playing within every human heart. He could discern the rhythm within each person, the beat within every pulse, the tune hidden in every eye. This knowledge made him just, and this just hearing kept his kingdom prosperous.

One day, when the autumn sunlight had thickened like honey, the Great Instrument-Maker issued a decree from his court —

not so much a command as a dream. Let a House of Drums be built, he said. A place where all instruments might gather, where wood, metal, hide, and breath might come to know one another. There, each instrument would narrate its own birth, its own labour, its own melody.

The courtiers were bewildered. Some took it for a festival, others for a trial. But in this kingdom, dreams were not questioned; they were merely given space. All bowed to the command and resolved to bring the king's vision to life. The artisans washed their tools; the architects drew no blueprints but measured the dimensions of dreams. When the foundation was laid, silent prayers were buried beneath the bricks. As the walls rose, hollow chambers were left within them, so that no sound might ever be trapped.

The House of Drums was built in the heart of the city — neither too lofty nor too low. Its dome did not mimic the sky but conversed with it. Its pillars were of human height, as if to say: "Stand here and listen." The floor was laid with wood that did not creak under the weight of footsteps but preserved their stories.

During this time, the very air of the kingdom began to change. People spoke less and learned to listen more. Children exchanged their noise for the art of clapping in rhythm, and the elderly set aside their complaints to memorise the names of the instruments. Every person felt as

though they were searching for their seat before some great, unseen gathering.

Each evening, the king came to watch the construction. When he placed his hand upon a wall, the bricks began to pulse. When he walked across the floor, the wood transformed into musical notes. In his presence, time slowed its pace, as if rehearsing a difficult melody.

Finally, the day of completion arrived. The doors swung open, and the wind stepped inside, playing the first rhythm — a rhythm that held a promise. The Great Instrument-Maker entered. Behind him came not the court, but the whole city. He raised his head to gaze at the dome, as though greeting an old friend. Then his eyes moved across the silent rows of instruments — silent, yet awake.

He smiled and said: "Today, I will not play you. Today, you shall speak for yourselves." And then he signalled for the musicians — those whose hands bore the calluses of devotion, whose fingers carried the warmth of breath, and whose eyes held their own unique stories.

Thus, the House of Drums ceased to be a mere building; it became a mirror — a mirror in which a person could see the instrument playing within their own self. The tale was only beginning; each instrument had yet to narrate its birth, its suffering, and its rhythm. But in that moment, for the first

time, the entire kingdom held its breath — with the certainty that what was about to be heard would not be mere music, but the autobiography of humanity itself.

The Naqqara (Kettledrum)

As the king, his wise ministers, and the nobles began their tour of the House of Drums, they listened to the silent stories of the various instruments.

The very first object to catch the eye upon entering was the naqqara. It was placed not like an instrument, but like a throne. All other instruments seemed to surround it like courtiers in a royal assembly, and the naqqara stood among them — a silent yet decisive presence. Its body was large, its circle complete, its hide stretched so taut that one felt the slightest negligence might shake the entire order.

The naqqara was not merely a musical instrument; it was a temperament, a proclamation, a beating chest. Its belly was deep and dark, like a person's inner self, where light is scarce and responsibility abundant. It laughs rarely, and even its smile is measured; when it speaks, it issues not words but verdicts. Upon its hide lay the fine cracks of time, like the wrinkles on a powerful face — wrinkles that signify not weakness, but experience.

The making of this instrument was not ordinary craftsmanship but an ordeal. First, the wood was chosen — neither soft, nor too hard. The artisans knew that excessive hardness would make the sound harsh, and excessive softness would make the resonance hollow. Precisely as power, if unbalanced, turns into tyranny or weakness. The wood was left for months in sun and wind, protected from rain but not entirely stripped of moisture — like a person led through the hardships of life yet not deprived of feeling.

The selection of the hide was equally meticulous. It came not from an animal raised in comfort, but from one that had known journeying, sun, thirst, and fear — for the naqqara could only bear a hide accustomed to receiving blows. When that hide was stretched over the wooden hoop, the artisan's hands trembled; a moment's error would render all that tension useless. Such is the fate of any ruler who sits upon the seat of power: the slightest slip, and all dignity crashes to the ground.

The naqqara was not merely played; it was struck. And that strike was never ordinary; it contained intention. When the hand fell upon it, the sound did not merely spread through the air but struck against bodies and sank into hearts. This sound did not flow like a melody; it fell like a command. Its echo bounced off the walls and returned like an irrevocable, unforgettable judgment.

The naqqara speaks not through conversation but through presence. When it enters an assembly, laughter instinctively fades, and people straighten their postures. Its silence contains noise, and its noise contains a strange silence. Even in its silent state, it is no less fearsome; its motionless existence is a warning, like a powerful being that says everything without uttering a word.

The naqqara's beauty lay not in delicacy. It was not an instrument like the sitar or the flute, which touches the heart. Its grace was in its weight, its depth, the completeness of its circle. It was perfect, yet that perfection offered little flexibility. That was its strength and its weakness. For what becomes complete begins to fear change.

The naqqara was a personality that had attained everything in life except tranquility. One upon whose shoulders family, system, tradition, and law had all been placed. An existence that supports others but can never lay its own head upon another's shoulder. The naqqara, too, always played alone; no other instrument could accompany it, for power is seldom shared.

When the king approached this instrument in the House of Drums, he did not reach out to touch it. He merely stood near it for a while, gazing. Perhaps he knew: what symbolizes power is not to be touched, but understood. The naqqara was silent at that moment, but within its silence lay the foundation

of all melodies yet to come. For without the strike, the rhythm is meaningless.

Thus, the naqqara was not the first instrument of the House of Drums, but the first principle. A proclamation that whatever would be played in this hall would not be mere music, but those voices of nature born from power, ego, responsibility, and solitude.

Here is the translation of the second file (`2.docx`) into literary English, maintaining the same poetic, symbolic, and metaphorical style as the first.

The Sitar

In that corner of the House of Drums where the light was deliberately kept dim, the sitar had its place. This was no accident; the sitar cannot fully speak its truth in harsh brightness. Its existence rings more true in half-shadows, for it is one of those beings that is less itself in a crowd and more itself in solitude. Its body was long, slender, and gently curved — as though years of accumulated feeling had bowed its stature. Upon its surface was not a shimmering gloss, but a muted glow — the kind of light that does not dazzle the eyes but sinks into the heart.

The making of the sitar was itself an inner journey. From the very choice of wood, one could see that this instrument was being built not for power, but for endurance. The artisan selected a timber that was soft within yet firm without — an existence that appears composed on the outside but holds back a flood of emotions within. Before carving the wood, it was left for months in silence. No hammer, no chisel — only waiting. For the sitar is not made in haste; just as a sensitive soul does not mature in a hurry.

When the chisel first touched the wood, it was not a strike but a confession. With each blow, a sigh escaped the wood, heard only by the artisan. He understood: the more slowly this instrument is built, the more deeply it will speak. The sitar's curves were the legacy of that slowness — no sharp angles, no merciless lines. Everything soft, as though the heart's words were being spoken with care.

The sitar's strings were its nerves. Delicate, bound in tension, capable of trembling at the slightest inattention. Each string had its own temperament; some more sensitive, some relatively stronger. But all were tied to the same body, just as a person's various feelings are all connected to a single heart. When these strings were pulled, no sound emerged — sound came only when they were released. This was the sitar's first lesson: the voice lies not in the grip, but in the release.

When the sitar played, it felt as though something remained unfinished. Its melody rose like a question, then lingered suspended in the air. That was its identity. It represented that nature of an instrument — and of a person — that lives more in the seeking than in the certainty. When played in joy, the sitar carried a faint trace of sorrow; when played in grief, a thin thread of hope ran through it. Like a sensitive person who is never entirely hopeless — who finds possibility even in pain.

The sitar's beauty was its fragility. It could not be played with force; violence would render it out of tune. This is why not everyone was worthy of playing it. Only that person whose hands held stillness and whose heart held patience could speak with the sitar. This instrument did not shout its truth; it asked for closeness from the listener. Like a sensitive human being who breaks apart without attention.

The sitar is the instrument that speaks last in an assembly, but when it speaks, the words linger long in the heart. It asks not for praise but for understanding, not for noise but for silence. Its eyes speak while its lips often remain still. The sitar, too, would fall silent immediately after playing, as if to say: "Now, you think."

In the House of Drums, when the king approached the sitar, he placed his steps gently. Perhaps he, too, knew that force does not work here. He touched the sitar, and its strings trembled faintly — without sound. It was merely a greeting, like two sensitive souls recognising each other.

Thus, the sitar was not the second instrument of the House of Drums, but the second temperament. After the strike of the naqqara, the sitar's vibration made it clear: nature is not built from power alone; it also needs feeling, questions, and solitude. The sitar proclaimed that in this hall, the heart's words would also be heard — even if they remained incomplete.

The Flute

The next turn was the flute's.

The flute was not placed in any prominent position. It was given neither the centre nor the honour of a high pedestal. It leaned against a simple pillar, like a mendicant sitting silently in the courtyard of a mosque — neither offering itself nor hiding. Yet if a gaze paused upon it, one would know: the real thing is here. The flute's very existence was its announcement: simplicity, emptiness, and annihilation.

The flute was not heavy or ornate like other instruments. It had no hide, no strings, no complex structure. It was merely a piece of bamboo — hollow, straight, light. But this was its deepest significance. For playing the flute requires not power, not a display of skill, but breath. And breath is the one thing given equally to all: to the rich and the poor, the king and the mendicant.

The first stage of making the flute was not filling, but emptying. The bamboo was cut, its pith removed, its inner

knots broken. It was a painful process, like stripping a person of their vanity, their ego, their claims. But without this process, the bamboo would remain just bamboo — not become an instrument. This is the first lesson of mendicancy: until the inside is empty, no sound can emerge.

Then holes were made in the bamboo. These holes were not mere technical necessities; they were wounds, experiences, those moments of life through which a person passes before becoming capable of speech. Each hole was measured and placed with precision; the slightest deviation would ruin the melody. Exactly as a person's sorrows: too many, and the personality shatters; too few, and there is no depth. The beauty of the flute lies in balance — neither too little, nor too much.

The flute's sound does not come into existence until someone pours their own breath into it. Thus, the true instrument is not the flute but the player. This is why every person's flute speaks differently. Some breaths carry stillness, some haste; some carry prayer, some lament. The flute accepts all, rejects none. It does not ask whose breath it is; it merely transforms it into sound. It is the symbol of that person who gives expression to others, then steps back.

In the flute's melody, there is no command, no question, no protest. It simply flows. Sometimes as joy, sometimes as separation, sometimes as the fragrance of a memory. Hearing

its sound, time seems to stop, and the moment expands, stretching from eternity past to eternity future. This is the vision of annihilation — leaving oneself to enter a greater circle.

The flute is the instrument that smiles upon hearing praise and remains silent upon hearing criticism. It sits at the back of any gathering, yet is remembered first. It has no claims, but its presence brings peace. It convinces no one, but moves everyone. The flute never shrieks; it knocks upon the heart.

The beauty of the flute is its colourlessness. It bore no carvings, no lustre. It remained as it was. For the mendicant is recognised not by changing, but by being. Its loveliness lay not in appearance but in effect. In the House of Drums, many instruments were splendid to behold, but after hearing the flute, even silence began to seem beautiful.

When the flute played, the House of Drums itself held its breath. The walls, the pillars, the lamps — all began to listen. As though all remembered that true music is not born outside, but within. The flute’s melody never reaches an end; it fades gradually, like a prayer that concludes not with "Amen," but with silence.

When the king paused before the flute, he asked no question. Perhaps because no question was needed. He merely closed his eyes and, for a moment, felt his own breath. For the flute

had reminded him: even power is ultimately dependent on breath.

Thus, the flute was not the third instrument of the House of Drums, but the third truth: the emptier a person becomes, the more meaningful they are. And who loses themselves, becomes a voice for others.

Here is the translation of the third file (`3.docx`) into literary English, preserving the same symbolic, metaphorical, and poetic register.

The Rubab

The caravan now drew near the rubab.

In that part of the House of Drums where light did not fall directly but slid down the walls, the rubab was placed. It was neither in the centre nor in a lonely corner, but at a point from which the entire hall could be seen. This suited its nature perfectly. The rubab is that instrument which appears little in the scene yet holds the scene together — like that elder in a family who sits silently watching everyone and, when the time comes, utters a single sentence that gathers all scattered words into meaning.

The rubab's body was heavy, but not cumbersome. In its wood were embedded centuries of memory — wood that had matured not in one season, but across many. Its surface bore no artificial shine, but the polish of hands; here and there, the marks of fingers, like the lingering moisture on a forehead after prayer. The hide stretched over its belly was like the dignified wrinkles on a responsible face — neither hard nor

loose; just taut enough to absorb the strike and hold the sound.

The making of the rubab was not mere craftsmanship; it was a lineage. It was said that every rubab is born carrying the memory of a family. When the artisan carved the wood, he remembered his father's hand, and his father remembered his father's. Thus, time itself was added to every stroke of the chisel. This is why the rubab is not made in haste. It needs silence, darkness, and waiting to ripen — the very things that make a person mature.

When the rubab's strings were fixed, their number was kept few. The rubab does not speak much; it speaks chosen words. Each string was like a generation — strong in its place, bound to its responsibility. The space between the strings was measured carefully, like the distance between relationships in a family: too much, and estrangement; too little, and suffocation. The rubab's beauty lay in that balance.

In the rubab's sound, the past spoke. This sound is not sharp, but deep. When it played, it felt as though a tale was being told — a tale containing war, migration, patience, and return. In its melody, there is neither the sitar's questioning nor the flute's annihilation; there is acceptance. Acceptance of time, acceptance of wounds, acceptance of destiny. It is that existence which sees everything change yet does not change itself.

The rubab's beauty lay in its dignity. It did not play to impress anyone, but whoever heard it remained long in its shadow. In its sound was a strange stillness, as though sitting beside an elder, the heart naturally slows. The rubab does not shout its truth; it waits for the listener to become ready.

The rubab is that instrument whose hands are rough, but whose touch holds compassion. It does not believe new things instantly, nor does it abandon old things without reason. It gives children not names, but stories. It advises little and exemplifies much. The rubab, too, was an example — not by showing, but by supporting.

Another excellence of the rubab was that it could support other instruments. If the naqqara's strike became too harsh, the rubab's depth would absorb it. If the sitar's vibration grew too fragile, the rubab's stillness would ground it. If the flute's annihilation began to dissolve into air, the rubab's melody would turn it into memory. Thus, the rubab was the spine of the entire House of Drums — invisible, yet indispensable.

When the king approached the rubab, he bowed his head in respect. This bowing was not against power, but before tradition. He did not touch the rubab; perhaps because some things are not owned by touch, but by reverence. In that moment, a strange silence spread through the House of Drums — not an empty silence, but a full one.

The rubab's melody does not last long, but its effect endures. When the sound fades, something remains inside the listener — a memory, a weight, a responsibility. This is why the rubab was often played in solitude; not in assemblies, but in self-communion. For this instrument brings a person face to face not so much with others, as with themselves.

Thus, the rubab was not the fourth instrument of the House of Drums, but the fourth foundation. It proclaimed that a person is not completed by power, sensitivity, or annihilation alone; they also need tradition, endurance, and memory. The one who holds those who came before is the one who can pave the way for those who come after.

The Tabla

In the centre of the House of Drums, where beneath the dome light and shadow dissolved into each other, the tabla rested with silent dignity. This instrument neither lived on breath like the flute, nor on the delicacy of fingers like the sitar, nor was it lost in the depths of tradition like the rubab. The tabla was, in its own place, a complete society — divided into two parts, yet bound in a single rhythm.

On one side was the dayan (right drum), small, agile, adorned with white hide, whose central circle of black ink resembled a focused mind. On the other side, the bayan (left drum) — large, heavy, of deep colour, whose sound carried the resonance of the earth and the fatigue of time. These two were incomplete without each other, like a human existence suspended between the individual and the community.

The tabla's structure was the deepest metaphor of social life. Its hide came from an animal's skin, but upon it were etched labour, patience, and order. Glue, flour, iron, and fire — all four elements were involved in its making, just as a personality is built from nature, experience, sorrow, and

consciousness. Each layer played a role, and if even one layer was weak, the entire harmony would shatter.

The true soul of this instrument lay in its hands. One hand applied force, the other restrained; one hand asked a question, the other gave an answer. This is why the tabla never spoke alone. It always sought dialogue with another — with the sitar, the rubab, the surmandal, or with any other heart. Just as a society is not built by an isolated individual, but by connection, conversation, and difference.

The tabla's syllables — dha, tin, na, tir, kit — were like the fundamental letters of language. In them was both proclamation and protest, joy and complaint. Some syllables made the heart beat faster; others made the feet sway involuntarily. This instrument placed its hand on the collective pulse of creation.

The black centre of the tabla was a symbol — the centre of consciousness, the centre of balance. If the strike landed off-centre, the sound would distort. Such is the case with every people: when it deviates from its moral centre, its centre of feeling, its centre of reason, its voice becomes noise, not melody.

When the king approached the tabla, he saw that its edges bore the marks of time. A fine crack here, a wrinkle in the hide there — all signs that the tabla was not only new, but

tested. Just as a society is built not only from dreams, but refined by defeats and experiences.

The tabla's beauty was not superficial. It was neither as refined as the flute nor as charming as the sitar, but its attraction lay in its utility. It carried everyone along. Without it, an assembly felt scattered, like a city without its people being merely a heap of buildings.

The sound of this instrument carried discipline. Every rhythm was bound within a limit, every cycle completed in its own time. This is the lesson the tabla taught: that freedom should not be unbridled, nor should order become lifeless. Balance is the true beauty.

The musician who played the tabla himself possessed a dual existence. His hands moved separately, but his heart remained one. He knew that if even one hand turned self-willed, the whole instrument would be disgraced. This musician was, in fact, the consciousness of society — the one who strives to keep everyone together.

In the House of Drums, the presence of the tabla brought order to the other instruments. The flute's breath gained pace, the sitar's questions found answers, and the rubab's tradition found steps. Thus, the tabla was no longer merely an instrument; it became a system.

Here is the translation of the fourth file (`4.docx`) into literary English, maintaining the symbolic, metaphorical, and poetic register established in the previous files.

Chapter Seven: The Surmandal

Now the caravan reached that part of the House of Drums where the walls were like mirrors and the flames of the lamps faded into thought. Here, the next instrument, the surmandal, lay in a sea of silence. This silence was not absence, but the silence of ordered reflection — like the mind of a learned person that, before speaking, arranges its questions in a row. The surmandal appeared simple, but within it was complexity; like that person who speaks little, yet harbours an entire universe within.

The structure of the surmandal resembled no other instrument. A flat, broad body of wood, upon which countless strings were stretched in precise order. Each string had its own place, its own limit, its own distance — not an inch forward, not an inch back. This order was not the result of tyrannical force, but a symbol of conscious discipline. Just as when a person, after knowledge and experience, organises themselves, a silent dignity emerges in their character.

In the making of this instrument, the most time was given to measurement. Before fixing each string, the artisan would pause and think, as though weighing a thought before giving

it tongue. The slightest carelessness would ruin the entire harmony. Such is the case with the mind — one false assumption, one raw opinion, and the whole system of thought wavers. The surmandal was the embodiment of that caution.

The surmandal was not played; it was plucked. Fingers glided over it as though turning the pages of memory. Each string was a memory, a thought, an experience. Some strings were touched again and again, some remained silent for ages, but all remained present in their place. This instrument was a map of the subconscious — where some memories are prominent, some faded, but none entirely absent.

The sound of this instrument held no suddenness. No scream, no sigh. Just a smooth, continuous flow — like a river of thought. Hearing this sound, time seemed to slow, and existence began to gaze inward. The surmandal's beauty lay in that stillness. It lifted the listener from the outer world and seated them in the inner world.

In the House of Drums, when the king paused before the surmandal, he felt that this instrument was asking nothing of him — neither praise nor attention. It simply existed — with its knowledge, its order, and its silent service. For the first time, the king realised that in the noise of power, true wisdom is often inaudible.

The surmandal's strings were made of different metals — some soft, some hard, some gleaming, some dull. This diversity was a symbol of civilised thought. Not every thought is alike; some experiences are gentle, some bitter; some bright, some shadowed. But when all are bound in one system, a complete consciousness is formed.

This instrument was often played behind other instruments. Its role was not to be prominent, but to support. Like someone who speaks little in an assembly yet understands everything everyone says. Its presence completed the harmony, and its absence left a void that no other instrument could fill.

The musician who played the surmandal usually sat bent over, his eyes fixed on the strings, like a reciter absorbed in a book. On his face was not ecstasy, but contemplation. He knew that this instrument awakens not emotions, but thoughts.

The beauty of this instrument lay in its simplicity. No excess of carvings, no glitter. But for the eye that knew how to see, it was clear that this simplicity was the fruit of years of discipline. Like someone who passes through ostentation to reach dignity.

In the House of Drums, the surmandal was a reminder that existence is not merely emotion, not merely tradition, not

merely society — it is also a mind. A mind that asks for order, asks for silence, and asks for time.

Thus, the surmandal emerged as the intellectual self — the self that is rarely heard, but without which everyone would be merely noise.

Chapter Eight: The Shehnai

The caravan now turned its attention to the next instrument: the shehnai.

Near that door of the House of Drums where the outside light entered, the shehnai was placed. This was the point where inner and outer worlds met. The shehnai was not an instrument of solitude; it was the instrument of announcement, of arrival, of beginning. Its very presence declared that something was about to start — like certain sounds in life that come as a knock of destiny.

The shehnai's structure held a strange, dignified simplicity. A long, conical body of wood, with a faint silver gleam at its far end — it seemed to rise from the earth and point towards the sky. Its mouth was narrow, but its message was wide. Like that person who is brief in speech, yet whose words grasp the whole assembly.

In the making of this instrument, the choice of wood was the most important stage. The artisan would observe a tree many

years old, assessing its veins, its colour, its silence, then choose it. As though selecting a person's temperament. For if the wood of the shehnai is weak, the sound becomes a scream; if too hard, the sound becomes lifeless. This same balance is required in a person's character.

The breath involved in the shehnai's sound was even greater than in the flute, but this breath carried not mendicancy, but proclamation. This breath said: "Come, see, listen — life is beginning." This is why this instrument has been associated with weddings, festivals, moments of victory, and new dawns. A person, too, sometimes compresses their entire being into a single announcement.

The holes of this instrument were like a person's experiences. Each hole was a path, a possibility. If the finger deviated even slightly, the whole melody changed. Such is the case with a person — one wrong decision, and the rhythm of life alters. The shehnai was a symbol of that delicate responsibility.

The musician who played the shehnai usually stood to play. His chest open, neck high, gaze forward. He knew that this instrument cannot be played while bowed. It requires courage, requires confidence. Like certain characters who, though remaining behind themselves, give others the courage to move forward.

In the shehnai's sound, a faint sadness was mingled with the joy. Because within every beginning, the shadow of an end exists. In the wedding shehnai, the sorrow of farewell; in the victory shehnai, the possibility of decline. This instrument reminded a person that even happiness demands responsibility.

In the House of Drums, when the shehnai played, the other instruments fell silent for a moment. The naqqara stopped its resonance, the tabla paused its rhythm, the surmandal gathered its thoughts. All knew that this sound was the announcement of a new chapter. Just as certain voices in society turn the direction of history.

The beauty of the shehnai lay in its spontaneity. It does not adorn itself, but adorns everything else. Its sound holds no philosophical complexity, yet its impact is deep. Like that person who does not overthink, but at the right moment speaks the right word.

Standing near the shehnai, the king felt that the true beauty of power lies not in accumulating celebration, but in sharing it. The shehnai taught him that a command can be not merely a proclamation, but also an invitation.

Thus, the shehnai became the symbol of that aspect which distributes hope, which makes beginnings audible, and which

knows that every new path demands a voice — clear, high, and true.

Here is the translation of the fifth file (`5.docx`) into literary English, preserving the symbolic, metaphorical, and poetic register of the previous chapters.

The Harmonium

The caravan now reached that section of the House of Drums where the scent of wood and the faint coolness of metal were intermingled. Here lay the harmonium. This instrument gave one the immediate feeling of standing between the ancient and the modern. Neither entirely a mendicant, nor completely a machine — rather, like that being who shapes their identity between nature and invention.

The harmonium's structure resembled a closed box, but this box held not secrets, but breath. A wooden body, metal reeds, and a bellows system at the back — all together formed an existence that does not move by itself, yet cannot live without motion. Such is the case of the modern person: surrounded by conveniences, yet dependent on them.

In the making of this instrument, measurement, calculation, and order played a great part. Here, ecstasy or spontaneity were minimal; planning was abundant. The artisan joined each piece as though a society were arranging its laws. The

slightest irregularity would render the entire system mute. The harmonium reminds us that without order, freedom becomes noise.

The most distinctive feature of the harmonium was its air. One hand pumped the air, the other produced the notes. If the air was too much, the sound became harsh; if too little, it became lifeless. This is the balance of life — passion and reason, desire and restraint. This instrument taught that breath alone is not enough; one must also know how to spend it.

In its sound there was neither the solitude of the flute nor the proclamation of the shehnai, but a steady statement. Like someone who does not shout, yet makes their point understood. This is why the harmonium was often used to accompany singing — it does not become the centre, but supports the centre.

The harmonium's keys were arranged in a row, black and white — like good and evil, day and night, yes and no. The musician's fingers moved over them as though a mind were travelling between decisions. Each key was a possibility, a path, yet all were connected to the same box.

This instrument was the most versatile in any assembly. Whether classical singing or folk tune, worship or entertainment — the harmonium found its place everywhere.

It was a symbol of existence's adaptability, that capacity which keeps itself alive even in changing times.

In the House of Drums, the harmonium's presence added a new civilisational layer. This instrument was not detached from tradition, nor did it rest stationary upon it. Like that person who respects their elders yet is not frightened by the questions of children.

When the king saw the harmonium, he felt that power is not merely the act of commanding, but also of running a system. The harmonium showed him that for continuous sound, continuous effort is required — if the hand that pumps the air tires, the melody falls silent.

The beauty of the harmonium lay in its utility. It appeared extremely simple, yet without it, many voices would remain incomplete. Like the one who is not in the picture, but makes the picture possible.

The Sarangi

Now the caravan's next halt was in a corner of the House of Drums where the sarangi lay. This was the place where feeling is born before sound. On seeing the sarangi, one felt as though this instrument was speaking even before being played — some untold story, some suppressed sigh, some pain that refuses to be compressed into words.

In the making of this instrument, the choice of wood was an emotional process. The artisan did not merely cut the tree's trunk; he read its age, its seasons, its wounds. For only that wood was considered suitable for the sarangi which had seen cold and sun, which had endured rain and the sharpness of wind. Just as a person's character is refined not in ease but in trials.

The sarangi had few strings, but their expanse was immense. Each string represented an emotional level — joy, grief, hope, anguish. But the real excellence lay not in plucking these strings, but in the bow. The bow's friction, its pauses, its pressure and softness — these were all signs of attitudes.

Sometimes excessive pressure turned into a scream, and sometimes softness became a whimper.

This instrument was played more by the heart than by the fingers. A musician unfamiliar with his own sorrow could never truly play the sarangi. This is why only those who were broken, yet not shattered; silent, yet not empty — only they approached the sarangi.

In the sarangi's sound there was a continuous tremor, as though the soul is never entirely still. This tremor told us that life is not about stillness, but about movement — whether that movement is in sorrow or in joy. This very tremor distinguished the sarangi from the flute's annihilation and the tabla's order.

When the sarangi plays, the atmosphere changes. The naqqara's resonance fades, the shehnai's announcement retreats, and the harmonium's order falls silent for a moment. All know that now someone is speaking — without words.

The sarangi player usually closes his eyes. His body sways gently, as though he too is flowing in the waves of the pain he is creating. He knows that this instrument is not for narrating, but for sharing.

The beauty of the sarangi lay in its fragility. The slightest carelessness could break its neck, snap its strings. Just as a person, if unable to bear the weight of emotions, shatters. But

when this fragility is treated with respect, this very instrument becomes the deepest of voices.

When the king paused before the sarangi, he felt for the first time that the voice of his subjects' hearts is hidden not in decrees, but in sighs. The sarangi taught him that if power does not listen to pain, it becomes meaningless.

Thus, the sarangi became the symbol of that aspect of a person which both weeps and lives; which breaks, yet turns its brokenness into melody. This instrument was the heartbeat within the House of Drums.

Here is the translation of the sixth file (`6.docx`) into literary English, continuing the same symbolic, metaphorical, and poetic register.

The Daf

The caravan reached the last section of the House of Drums, where the daf was suspended. It was placed upon no throne, hidden in no corner; rather, it seemed to hang in the very air, as though its true place was not the earth but the space between hearts. The daf was not an instrument for the individual; it was the instrument of the collective, the instrument of conclusion and completion — that sound in which a person loses their boundaries.

The daf's structure was simple, yet within that simplicity were condensed centuries of discipline. A circular wooden frame, a stretched hide — that was all. No strings, no buttons, no complex mechanism. But this very simplicity made it the most compassionate of instruments. Like that person who, after the long journey of knowledge, pain, and experience, finally arrives at simplicity.

In the making of this instrument, no special carving or ornamentation was needed. The artisan only ensured that the

wood was strong and the hide was stretched taut — neither too much, nor too little. For a slight looseness in the daf becomes negligence, and a slight tightness becomes oppression. This very balance is also the test of the spirit.

The daf's sound was produced directly by the strike — not by the delicacy of fingers, not by the caution of breath. The hand rose and fell, and the sound was born. This sound passed through no filter, like the heart's words that come straight to the tongue. That is why the daf's sound held not artifice, but truth.

This instrument was always played in a circle. No one ahead, no one behind; all were equal. The daf's circle reminded that beginning and end meet at the same point. What had started in the House of Drums was completed here.

In the daf's sound was ecstasy — an ecstasy that does not break the individual, but joins them. When the daf played, the body would move of its own accord, as though the spirit had made a temporary truce with the earth. This was the moment where reason fell silent and consciousness became dancing.

When the daf plays, all other instruments fall silent. Not because they are defeated, but because their words have now condensed into a single simple strike. Power, question, annihilation, tradition, society, mind, beginning, order, and pain — all dissolve into that one resonance.

The player of the daf is not a master musician; often, he is an ordinary person — a farmer, a dervish, a traveller. For the daf asks not for skill, but for presence. Only a hand and a heart. This is its greatest democracy.

When the king came before the daf, he descended from his throne and set foot upon the ground. He felt that the final station of power is not authority, but participation. The daf showed him that the true kingdom is a heart that beats in rhythm with the subjects.

The daf's beauty lay in its indifference. It sought neither praise nor applause. When it played, it made all equal; when it fell silent, it still left its traces behind. Like that person who departs from the world, yet whose strikes continue to echo through time.

Thus, the daf became the symbol of existence's final stage — where the individual leaves behind their identity and dissolves into the collective; where sound is no longer a melody but becomes an experience; and where the House of Drums is no longer merely a building but becomes a metaphor for existence itself.

Analysis of the Flute

When the king completed his long tour of the House of Drums, upon his face was not that smile which follows praise, but that silence which descends after understanding. He had seen all the instruments, heard all, recognised the temperament of each, the limits of each, the strengths of each, and the weaknesses of each. The naqqara had shown him the pride of power, the sitar had reminded him of the prick of questions, the rubab had placed the burden of tradition upon his shoulders, the tabla had taught him the rhythm of society, the surmandal had shown him the order of the mind, the shehnai had given him the joy of beginning, the harmonium had explained the convenience of order, the sarangi had touched the truth of pain, and the daf had made him taste the pleasure of dissolving into the collective.

But when he had seen and heard all, his feet involuntarily turned towards that corner where the flute lay silent — upon no throne, with no announcement, just a simple piece of wood, inside which emptiness dwelt.

The king lifted the flute in his hand and felt as though he was holding not a weapon, but a wound. Turning towards the court, he said:

"I have heard all the instruments, but I like the flute the most."

Murmurs arose in the court. Some thought this choice was a sign of weakness; some guessed that perhaps the king had preferred refinement over power. But the king raised his hand, silenced everyone, and began his speech — a speech that was not mere praise, but an understanding.

"The flute does not speak," said the king, "until breath and mystery become one."

"This instrument is played not by fingers, but by intention. Sound is born in it when the inner mystery harmonises with the breath."

He pointed to the holes of the flute.

"These holes," he said, "are not ornaments. They are wounds. Each hole is the memory of a deprivation. If the wood had remained whole, the flute would never have been made."

The king paused for a moment. In his voice was that stillness which comes only after experience.

"The naqqara holds its own power," he said. "It announces, whether there is something inside or not. The sitar asks questions, the rubab carries burdens, the tabla keeps rhythm, the sarangi weeps — but the flute does nothing until it is breathed into."

Silence fell upon the court.

"And this is what makes it the greatest," said the king.

"The flute is not the master of its own voice. It does not demand; it receives."

He brought the flute close to his lips, then put it back down, as though he knew that not every breath is worthy of this instrument.

"This instrument tells me the true reality of existence," he said.

"Existence is nothing until there is emptiness within it."

The king explained that the artisan who makes the flute first chooses the wood, then hollows it out.

"This hollowness," he said, "is not weakness; it is capacity. What is full gives no space to the breath."

He looked towards the court scholars.

"Knowledge too, if filled with ego, receives no revelation," he said.

"The heart too, if overflowing with pride, produces no sound of love."

Of the flute's sound, he said:

"This voice does not scream, but it lasts long.

It is not an announcement; it is a prayer.

It is not a command; it is a request."

Then he said something that made everyone sitting in the court start with surprise:

"The flute is dear to me because it says nothing itself — it lets someone else speak."

He looked towards the sky, as though he was speaking not to any individual, but to Someone Else.

"This instrument reminds me that we are not the true doers. We are merely the path."

The king said that in all other instruments, some degree of selfhood is present.

"One takes pride in its voice, another in its complexity, another in its power — but the flute has nothing to be proud of."

He smiled, but in that smile there was more gratitude than humour.

"The flute knows that if the breath does not come, it is merely a piece of wood."

He placed his hand upon his heart.

"And life is the same."

Then he spoke that word upon which the House of Drums completed its meaning:

"Life is not born as a flute."

The court held its breath.

"Life is carved," said the king.

"By pain.

By loss.

By waiting."

Running his finger over the flute's holes, he said:

"Each hole is a departure.

Each cut a separation.

Each emptiness a prayer."

Then he said softly:

"Love empties life.

And when existence becomes empty, only then does the eternal breath descend into it."

Saying this, the king fell silent.

The House of Drums was also silent.

And in that silence, if anyone had ears to hear, they could hear the sound of the flute —

that sound which is heard only by the one

whose head has become harmonious with the breath.

He held the flute in his hand and looked at it for a long time. This slender piece of wood, with neither lustre nor pomp, yet it had left the deepest mark upon the king's heart. His gaze fixed upon the six black holes carved into the flute's body.

The king turned to his ministers and said:

"This flute speaks only when the breath is in harmony with a mystery. But why are these six holes in its body? Are they

merely technical necessities, or is some meaning hidden within them as well?"

The ministers bowed their heads with respect. Each minister, according to his own understanding, offered an interpretation of each hole.

Here is the translation of the seventh file (`7.docx`) into literary English, preserving the symbolic, metaphorical, and poetic register of the preceding chapters.

The First Minister

The first minister, the eldest in age and experience, stepped forward and spoke:

"O Refuge of the World! The first hole of the flute is closest to the earth, for it pertains to that quality which binds it to the ground — namely, the self, the ego, the khudi."

He said that the self is not merely pride, but that illusion in which a person considers themselves separate from the cosmos. The sages call it nafs-i-ammarah (the self that commands to evil). This same selfhood is broken by humility, and in the eyes of the arboreal sage, its very existence is not acknowledged.

The minister quoted the King of Rome:

"You are not a drop in the ocean, but the entire ocean in a drop — yet the condition is that the 'I' does not remain."

He continued:

"If this first hole is closed, breath may enter the flute, but no melody will be produced — only noise will be born.

Similarly, if the ego is not closed, even one's worship becomes ostentation, and one's knowledge becomes arrogance."

Then he repeated the saying of the Sacred Traveller:

"Blessed are the meek."

According to the arboreal sage:

"The flute is first hollowed out; only then does it become an instrument. The body, too, until it is empty, cannot become a path for the breather's breath."

"O Refuge of the World! When the flute is hollow, it produces melody; and when there is humility, meaning is born."

The Second Hole: Desire

The second hole is desire. Desire is not evil in itself; it is a heat. Like breath — if it is absent, life ends; if it exceeds its limit, it burns everything.

He recited the words of the poet of couplets:

"Where desire sits enthroned, there God does not dwell."

"The seeker says that excessive desire burns the flute's tube. According to the arboreal sage, this very longing is the root of sorrow. But if this same desire is refined, it becomes love."

He said:

"The flute limits the breath. If there were no limit, no melody would be produced. Similarly, if desire is not restrained, it becomes not an instrument, but a broken piece of wood."

"Desire is not to be killed, but refined. This restraint is the foundation of melody."

The Third Hole: Fear

The third hole — this hole is kept closed the most, for it is the hole of fear.

Fear stiffens the fingers, stops the breath. The Sacred Traveller's phrase he repeated:

"Do not be afraid."

"When fear closes this hole, the breath suffocates. But when trust comes, the voice becomes clear."

He said:

"Faith is the finger that lifts fear."

The Fourth Hole: Love

The fourth hole is love.

"This is the heart of the flute."

He mentioned the Indian flautist whose flute, through love, drew everyone towards itself.

Then he recited the saying of the King of Rome:

"Love is the bridge between you and everything."

"Without love, the melody is cold; and with love, even silence begins to sing."

He said:

"Love is the central note of the flute."

The Fifth Hole: Intellect

The fifth hole is intellect.

"Intellect decides which hole should open."

He quoted the Sufi philosopher:

"Intellect is a lamp, not the sun."

"If intellect becomes the ruler, the melody is spoiled. It must remain a servant."

He said:

"The mind is a guardian, not a musician."

The Sixth Hole: Surrender

The sixth hole — surrender.

"This hole is closest to the mouth, for it is surrender."

The sages call it fana (annihilation). In the Indian scriptures it is said:

"Leaving everything behind, come into my refuge."

The Sacred Traveller said:

"Not my will, but Thine be done."

"When this hole opens, the melody is no longer personal. The flute forgets itself."

"This is the station where existence falls silent, and the eternal song is heard."

The Second Minister

When the first minister completed his speech and fell silent, a moment of hush spread through the hall. The flute was still in the king's hand, and its holes were conversing with the king's gaze like some unspoken truth. At that moment, the second minister — who was by nature more balanced, more cautious, and familiar with both worldly and spiritual sciences — stepped forward. He looked at the flute and then spoke softly:

"O Refuge of the World! I see these same six holes from another angle. To me, they are those doors of a person's inner strengths and weaknesses without which neither the body is complete, nor the melody."

The First Hole: The Ego

The first hole — this is the lowest and most dangerous hole of the flute. For it represents the self — that ego which makes a person self-centred. If the self is unbridled, the voice no longer remains a melody; it becomes mere noise. The speaker speaks, but his words do not reach the heart; he acts, but his actions lack grace. But the minister immediately added:

"To completely obliterate the self is neither possible nor desirable. If it is kept in check, given order, this very self becomes energy — the force of progress, the fuel of struggle."

"The ego cannot be killed; it is kept in restraint. In the flute, if this hole is closed, the breath suffocates; if left open, disharmony arises. Balance alone produces the note."

The Second Hole: Wrath

The second hole is wrath, anger. This is the fire within the self. If anger is uncontrollable, it destroys the harmony of the entire instrument. The fingers begin to tremble, the breath becomes disorderly, and the melody scatters. But the minister did not call it merely a negative force:

"When wrath is purified, this very fire becomes courage, the strength of justice, the nerve to stand against oppression."

"Channelled anger becomes power. Just as fire, if it is in a lamp, gives light; but if it ignites a forest, it burns everything."

The Third Hole: Greed

The third hole is greed, avarice. This hole symbolises excessive attachment to the world. Greed is that open hole that destroys balance. When one's grip on the world becomes

too tight, the flute's weight is disturbed, the voice begins to tremble. The constant desire for more, the constant fear of not having enough — all this makes the melody restless.

"But if greed is restrained, it transforms into contentment. Contentment is that note which grants a person tranquillity. A slight immoderation can spoil the entire tune."

The Fourth Hole: Fear

The fourth hole is that of fear. This is the fear that silences the speaker. Fear of loss, fear of death, fear of people.

"If this fear dominates, the fingers freeze, the breath stops, and the instrument falls silent. The speaker becomes afraid to speak, afraid to live. But when this same fear is purified, it becomes the fear of God. This is a strange spiritual paradox: sacred fear produces the sweetest melody. This fear steadies a person, saves them from transgression, and brings dignity to the voice."

The Fifth Hole: Intellect

The fifth hole is the symbol of intellect. Intellect is necessary, but limited. If intellect alone becomes the ruler, the voice becomes dry — correct but lifeless. Calculation happens, but no warmth. A plan exists, but no attraction.

"When intellect is guided by love, wisdom is born. Intellect should follow the heart, not lead. Intellect draws the map, but the heart undertakes the journey."

The Sixth Hole: Love

The sixth hole is love. The minister's voice softened. This is the highest hole, closest to the breath. Love is the force that brings order to all the remaining holes. If love is pure, the flute pours forth eternal and everlasting music. Here, the self, wrath, greed, fear, and intellect — all come within their proper limits.

A deep silence spread through the hall. The flute remained silent, but in its silence, many worlds were now speaking.

Here is the translation of the eighth file (`8.docx`) into literary English, continuing the symbolic, metaphorical, and poetic register.

The Third Minister

When the second minister fell silent, the light in the hall seemed to grow dimmer. The flute was no longer in the king's hand; it lay upon a velvet table, as though offering itself for conversation. At that moment, the third minister — who was a man of few words but profound thought — stepped forward slowly. In his eyes, the weariness of philosophy and the gleam of gnosis existed together.

He said:

"O Refuge of the World! To me, these six holes of the flute are six veils. If they remain closed, the individual remains silent; if they open, they become a melody."

The First Hole: The Body

"The first hole is the body. The body is both the first prison and the first instrument. The body craves pleasures: taste, touch, comfort, ease. If existence becomes a slave to the body, this very body binds it to the earth. In the flute, if this hole opens excessively, the sound becomes heavy and clumsy. But when the body is given order, this same prison

becomes a vessel — a container in which spiritual breath can dwell. The body then is no longer a prison; it becomes worship. Discipline, restraint — these are the refinement of this hole. The flute speaks only when its first hole learns to hold the breath rather than block it."

The Second Hole: The Self

"The second hole is the self: pride, lust, the desire for dominance. This is the station where the mortal existence learns to say 'I.' And this 'I' is the greatest veil. When the self is unbridled, the mortal wants every sound to be his own praise. In the flute, if this hole is uncontrolled, the melody turns into self-display. But when the self is mastered, it transforms into humility, service, and gratitude. Then it no longer considers itself the centre, but a path. When the self is refined, the hole does not remain closed — it becomes clear."

The Third Hole: The Mind

"The third hole is the mind — question, doubt, calculation, anxiety. The nature of the mind is to think. But its illness is overthinking."

"In the flute, if this hole is in constant motion, the breath cannot settle. Similarly, if the mind continuously makes noise, the heart falls silent. When the mind becomes silent, clarity arises. This silence is not ignorance; it is awareness.

Just as still water reflects the sky, so does a silent mind reveal reality."

The Fourth Hole: The Wounded Heart

"The fourth hole is that part of the heart filled with sorrow, envy, and anguish. This is the place where the individual is most wounded."

"If this hole remains dirty, the flute's voice develops a moan. The speaker speaks complaint; when he listens, he listens with suspicion. But when this same heart is cleansed, compassion, mercy, and empathy are born. Pain then is no longer poison; it becomes medicine. A pure heart produces the softest, yet the most powerful, note."

The Fifth Hole: Intellect

"The fifth hole is intellect — logic, argument, order. Intellect knows boundaries. But it cannot measure reality. If intellect becomes the ruler, the flute's voice becomes correct but lifeless. Everything is right in calculation, but there is no taste. When intellect surrenders, wisdom is born. Intellect must bow, so that the heart may advance. This bowing brings softness to the flute."

The Sixth Hole: The Ego

"The sixth hole is the ego. The last hole is the finest, the highest. It is identity — who am I?"

"As long as this hole exists, the speaker considers his voice his own. But when it dissolves, annihilation takes place. Here, the speaker disappears, and the melody remains. Sound is born only when the veils become doorways. What was an obstacle becomes a path. Then the flute speaks, and meaning is born."

The Fourth Minister

When the fourth minister stepped forward, upon his face was a strange contentment, as though he had returned from a long spiritual journey. He looked at the flute with great reverence and said:

"O Refuge of the World! To me, these six holes of the flute are the six stages of its life. They are the ladders by climbing which its existence moves from mere existence to meaning. The holes in the flute are not made all at once; they are made one by one, just as an individual passes through one stage after another."

The First Hole: Raw Nature

"The first hole — raw nature. This is the initial stage, where one is subject to instinct: hunger, fear, survival, pleasure. Good and evil are not moral questions at this stage but matters of benefit and loss. Just as when the reed is first cut, it is merely wood — neither instrument nor melody. This first hole is the lowest, because it keeps the body tied to the earth.

If one stops at this stage, he merely survives; he does not live. Sound emerges, but it is a natural cry, not a melody."

"This stage is necessary," the minister explained, "because without instinct, life is impossible. But if this same instinct becomes the final truth, the body cannot advance beyond being merely animate. The journey begins here, but to stop is decline."

The Second Hole: Inner Conflict

"The second hole is the symbol of inner conflict. This is the moment when the self first fights with itself. Desire pulls one way; conscience pulls another. This very struggle makes the individual restless, but this restlessness is also the first sign of growth. In the flute, this is where the breath first flows in stops and starts. This stage is painful. A person questions himself, doubts himself. But if this conflict does not happen, transformation is impossible. Whoever never fights himself never finds himself. There is noise here, disharmony too — but this very disorder becomes the herald of future order."

The Third Hole: Discipline

"The third hole is that of discipline, of practice, of moral effort. This is the station where existence teaches itself. Here, principles are formed, limits are set. Existence says: 'I will do this, I will not do that.' In the flute, this hole gives order to the voice, turning irregular breath into melody. This stage is

difficult, for here freedom is less and responsibility more. But this very discipline gives form to existence. Just as a flute cannot be made without measurement, so existence is not complete without order. Here, existence ceases to be mere reaction and begins to choose."

The Fourth Hole: Self-Knowledge

"The fourth hole is that of self-knowledge. Here, the individual learns to see himself — not as accusation, not as pride, but as reality. This stage is a mirror. He recognises his weaknesses, his capacities, his intentions, his fears. In the flute, this hole gives depth to the voice. This awareness makes him both softer and stronger. He begins to understand others, because he has understood himself. Whoever knows himself stops fighting the world. This stage introduces him to the inner silence where the true melody is born."

The Fifth Hole: Love

"The fifth hole is love. Here, he abandons calculation," the minister's voice grew softer. "This love is not limited to any single form — it is attachment to the Creator, to creation, to truth. In the flute, this hole gives heat to the voice, breathes life into it. Here, the individual acts without expecting return. His service becomes worship, his silence a prayer. Without love, awareness is cold, and order is lifeless. This stage takes him beyond his own self."

The Sixth Hole: Surrender

"The sixth hole — that of surrender. The last hole is the highest, closest to the breath. Here, existence releases itself. This is surrender — annihilation. Here no desire remains, no fear, no question. The human does not make the melody; the melody is made through him. At this stage, the flute forgets itself. The voice belongs to no one. This is union — where the instrument no longer remains, only the music remains."

"O Refuge of the World! The six holes of the flute are not six wounds, but six stages. The more empty existence becomes, the more filled it grows — and ultimately, by losing itself, it gains everything."

In the House of Drums there was silence, but now this silence had become the threshold of union.

Here is the translation of the ninth file (`9.docx`) into literary English, continuing the symbolic, metaphorical, and poetic register to the conclusion.

The Fifth Minister

The fifth minister stepped forward. On his face was the depth of thought, and in his gaze a strange stillness. He was among those who recognise things not by their appearance but by their effect. He looked at the flute as though seeing someone else in a mirror, then spoke with great composure:

"O Refuge of the World! I consider the six holes of the flute to be the six perceptual senses. As a person hears, sees, tastes, and feels, so he becomes. The sound of the flute, too, is ordered by the opening and closing of these holes."

The First Hole: Sight

"The first hole represents sight. It is the eye. But not merely the eye — the eye of choice. One does not see everything; one sees only what one wants to see. If sight becomes subject to desire, reality is distorted. In the flute, if this hole remains uncontrolled, the voice goes astray."

The minister said that the refinement of the gaze is the first training. Whoever fixes his eyes upon every scene, his inner

being fills with noise. But when the gaze is simplified and limited, it begins to recognise beauty.

"When the gaze is pure, the world is no longer a burden; it becomes a sign."

"The flute, too, gives a clear sound only when this first hole remains within limit — neither completely closed, nor uncontrollably open."

The Second Hole: Hearing

"The second hole is hearing. This is the door through which the world enters existence. One hears everything, but not every sound is beneficial. Slander, noise, hatred — these enter the heart through the pathway of hearing. In the flute, if this hole accepts every breath, the voice becomes scattered. Whoever does not know what to hear and what to leave behind becomes fragmented within. Pure hearing listens even to silence. Just as the paused rest in the flute is part of the melody, so does silent listening refine character in a human."

The Third Hole: Speech

"The third hole is the tongue. Words are also sounds. And not every sound is a melody. The flute's sound emerges from measure, but many people's words are often uncontrollable. Whoever does not exercise restraint in speech, his character becomes weightless." The minister said that silence, too, is a

note. Whoever speaks little but speaks rightly, his words echo long. "If the tongue is in tune, the personality itself becomes a melody."

The Fourth Hole: Taste

"The fourth hole is the symbol of taste — not only of food, but of liking and disliking. One becomes what one desires. Uncontrolled desire makes the flute's melody heavy. But restraint gives refinement to taste. Whoever wants to taste everything recognises the flavour of none. This hole teaches that desire is not to be suppressed entirely, but to be disciplined."

The Fifth Hole: Touch

"The fifth hole is touch. This hole represents relationships. Every touch creates attachment. If a person clings to everything, he loses freedom. In the flute, if this hole is too closed, the voice stops; if too open, balance is lost. Right touch is that which keeps close, but does not imprison. This is the wisdom of relationship."

The Sixth Hole: Insight

"The last hole is beyond the external senses. It is insight — the gaze that sees even when the eyes are closed." The minister's voice deepened. "This is the perception that distinguishes between truth and falsehood. When this hole

opens, all the remaining senses come into order. Without insight, knowledge is blind, and worship is directionless."

"O Refuge of the World! The flute's melody depends upon which hole is open and which is closed. Character, too, is built from this balance. Whoever trains his senses becomes himself a living flute — in which every breath produces meaning."

The Sixth Minister

When the fifth minister finished his speech and stepped back, a strange warmth began to be felt in the House of Drums. As though feelings, instead of words, were restless to speak. At that moment, the sixth minister stepped forward. In his eyes was a gleam like fire — but a fire that did not burn, rather illuminated.

He looked at the flute and said:

"O Refuge of the World! I consider these six holes to be six kinds of fire burning within existence. These are the conflagrations that empty no one. The only difference is that in some, this fire becomes smoke and blinds the eyes; in others, this same fire becomes light and shows the way. The flute, too, produces melody through the channeling of these fires."

The First Fire: Desire

"The first hole — desire. This is the first fire, and the most ancient. Desire moves life: hunger, love, success, recognition — all are branches of this fire. If this fire is absent, the body

remains a clay puppet — it neither moves, nor desires, nor dreams."

But the minister took a deep breath and said: "When this fire becomes uncontrollable, it gives not light, but only smoke. Unbridled desire clouds the vision. One begins to see the small as insufficient, and the large also as inadequate. In the flute, if this hole remains too open, the breath scatters, and the melody cannot hold. But when desire is refined, this very fire becomes the power of creation. A person desires, but with patience. The fire burns, but like a lamp. Disciplined desire is the first heat of the melody," said the minister.

The Second Fire: Wrath

"The second fire is that of wrath. This is the fire that both stands existence up and burns it down. Anger is both the spark that rises against injustice and the flame of selfishness. When this fire is uncontrolled, the tongue becomes poison, the hand a weapon, and the heart desolate. In the flute, if this hole is ill-mannered, the voice becomes bitter, piercing to the ears. But when wrath is purified, this same fire transforms into courage, honour, and justice. It is the heat that does not let a person remain silent before falsehood. When wrath comes into tune, it becomes power. And when power becomes a melody, oppression ceases."

The Third Fire: Fear

"The third fire is that of fear — silent but continuously burning. Fear of loss, fear of death, fear of loneliness — all these halt the step. If this fire dominates, a person becomes ash within, though appearing alive without. In the flute, if this hole is closed by fear, the breath enters but stops; no sound is produced. But when this same fear is purified, it becomes reverence — a reverence that keeps a person within limits. This fire does not burn but steadies. When this fire turns into a lamp, it gives the softest light. And this light bestows dignity upon the melody."

The Fourth Fire: Pride

"The fourth fire is that of pride. This is the most deceptive fire, for it gives the illusion of light. Pride makes one feel that he is sufficient unto himself. This very feeling is the greatest veil. In the flute, if this hole hardens, the breath strikes and returns; no melody is produced. If the fire of pride is uncontrolled, it isolates the individual. He stands the highest, but most alone. But when this same fire is refined, it becomes dignity. Existence knows itself, but does not consider itself God. 'A bowed flame gives light. An arrogant flame burns everything.'"

The Fifth Fire: Hope

"The fifth fire is that of hope. This is the fire that does not extinguish even in darkness. Hope gives the impulse to move.

But if this fire detaches from reality, it becomes delusion — a light that shows not the path, but dreams. In the flute, if this hole opens in the wrong place, the voice becomes sweet but hollow. But when hope burns with patience and awareness, this same fire becomes steadfastness. The body does not break, does not bow, but pauses and moves. Hope is the fire that gives continuity to the melody."

The Sixth Fire: Love

"The final fire is that of love — the brightest, the purest."

The minister's voice grew soft. "This is the fire that does not burn, but melts everything. When love is pure, all the remaining fires come into order. Desire becomes pure, wrath becomes justice, fear becomes reverence, pride becomes dignity, and hope becomes certainty. In the flute, this hole is closest to the breath, because love is the true motive force. Here, the melody is no longer personal; it becomes eternal and everlasting. Love is the fire that does not become smoke — only light and melody."

"O Refuge of the World! Six fires burn within existence. Whoever leaves them uncontrolled is lost in smoke. And whoever brings them into tune becomes himself a flute — in which every breath speaks as light."

Silence spread through the House of Drums. But this silence was not of ash — it was a fire that was about to become melody.

The King's Analysis

The king listened to the ministers' opinions in silence, with attention and dignity. At that moment in the House of Drums, there was a strange stillness; as though every instrument, every wall, every candle was awaiting the king's words. Then the king stepped forward. In his voice was not authority but the depth of gnosis. He took the flute in his hand, closed his eyes, and said: "You have seen the six holes as metaphors of desire, the self, intellect, love, the body, and fire; I see them in the light of the Sacred Scripture — for the true melody is that which harmonises with the notes of revelation."

The First Hole: The Commanding Self (Nafs-i-Ammārah)

"This first hole is the commanding self. It is the rawest level of existence, where desire commands and reason remains silent. The commanding self is that inner voice that says: 'I want, I want now, I want at any cost.' This is the station where the flute's existence is solid wood — without voice, without effect — for no fissure has yet opened in it."

"This hole is made by pain. The Final Scripture calls this self 'the one that commands to evil,' but it does not command its obliteration. It is the first wound, the first passage, through which air can pass. If this hole does not exist, the flute remains silent; if it is uncontrolled, it becomes a scream. Therefore, the commanding self is not to be cut away, but carved — fasting, restraint, self-accounting are the tools of that carving. If this hole remains open without discipline, the self turns every breath into its own hunger. But when this hole comes into balance, when desire enters the limit of worship, this very self becomes fuel — the fuel of movement, struggle, and life."

The Second Hole: The Blaming Self (Nafs-i-Lawwāmah)

Here the king's voice softened. "This is the hole where existence first questions itself. This is the birth of conscience. The blaming self rebukes, reproaches, holds up a mirror. This is the stage where a person begins to hear his own voice — and often finds it unpleasant."

"This hole is deeper than the first, for it pierces not only desire but also pride. At this point, a person divides into two: one who commits the sin, and another who is ashamed. This very struggle produces the note. If this hole does not exist, existence advances no further than being merely animate. If it exceeds its limit, it produces despair. The Sufis have said that the blaming self is a mercy — for remorse is the door to

repentance. This hole of the flute makes the voice tremble; it is this trembling that touches hearts."

The Third Hole: The Inspired Self (Nafs-i-Mulhamah)

"This is the station where a person first tastes the difference between good and evil. This hole is that of inspiration — the inner whisper. Now the self does not only blame, but also shows the way. This is the level where a sudden thought of goodness rises in the heart, without any reasoning. This hole lies in the middle of the flute — the place of balance. The sound emerging from here is clear, but not yet complete. A person has now begun to recognise goodness, but remaining steadfast upon it is still to come."

"Here, intellect and heart shake hands for the first time. If this hole closes, the individual becomes a dry scholar; if uncontrolled, he falls prey to delusion. Measuring inspiration by the touchstone of sacred law is the responsibility of this station."

The Fourth Hole: The Tranquil Self (Nafs-i-Mutma'innah)

Here, a sense of peace descended into the king's voice. "This is the hole where noise ends. Desire is silent, conscience is content, inspiration is clear. The tranquil self is that state where the individual is pleased with his Creator, and his Lord is pleased with him. This hole gives depth to the flute. The

sound emerging from here holds not anxiety, but stillness. This is the melody that grasps the heart, for it contains no doubt."

"Here, a person lives in the world but is not of the world. Sorrows come but do not break him. Joy arrives but does not intoxicate. This station is not about worship, but about servant-hood."

The Fifth Hole: The Spirit (Rūh)

The king placed the flute near his heart. "This hole is not of the self, but of the spirit. It is not made by effort alone; it is a gift. Here, breath is no longer mere air; it becomes the commanding word. Here, intellect falls silent, the tongue is stilled, and the heart is merely present. This is the station where the listener and the producer of the melody become one. The spirit is that mystery which is not spoken, only lived. To hear the sound emerging from this hole of the flute, one needs not ears, but a heart."

The Sixth Hole: The Secret (Sirriyat)

Finally, the king fell silent. Then he spoke.

"The sixth hole is the secret. This hole is neither visible nor measurable. It is that mystery where the 'I' ends. Here, there is no self, no intellect, not even the awareness of spirit — only the Truth. This is the station where the flute does not

play itself, but is played. This is annihilation, and this is everlastingness."

The king set down the flute. There was silence in the House of Drums — but that silence was itself a melody.